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## THE FREEDOM AS A FRUIT OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY: OPERATIONALIZATION OF LIBERTY AND DEMYSTIFICATION OF FREEDOM

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### Abstract

*This paper is qualitative and theoretical research of the concept of freedom, perceived through different epistemological traditions. The research focus is laid on the phenomenon of freedom in the frames of liberal ontological and epistemological tradition, freedom as a derivative of the individual liberty, and how the individual liberty remains a precondition for evolving freedom. The beginning is characterized as a comparison between the different freedom traditions, starting with collective freedom traditions, following individualist freedom traditions and finalizing with operationalization of individual liberty. The process of operationalization of liberty, or presenting it as an organizational and regulation principle, leads to demystification of freedom in individualistic traditions, and indicates its tight connection with individual liberty.*

*Key words: freedom; individual liberty; liberalism; individual space; individual action*

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is qualitative and theoretical research of the concept of freedom, perceived through different epistemological traditions. The research focus is laid on the phenomenon of freedom in the frames of liberal ontological and epistemological tradition, freedom as a derivative of the individual liberty, and how the individual liberty remains a precondition for evolving freedom. The beginning is characterized as a comparison between the different freedom traditions, starting with collective freedom traditions, following individualist freedom traditions and finalizing with operationalization of individual liberty. The process of operationalization of liberty, or presenting it as an organizational and regulation principle, leads to demystification of freedom in individualistic traditions, and indicates its tight connection with individual liberty.

The problem of defining freedom in a liberal sense is common. This paper addresses the division line between the phenomena of individual liberty and freedom in liberal sense, and the relation established as a result of their connection - analyzed.

## DEFINING FREEDOM NEUTRALLY

A lot of definitions and interpretations of the essence of freedom could be found. The oldest sign symbolizing the freedom (or the liberty) is the Sumerian *Ama-gi* symbol (see: Image 1), which represents a situation where the prisoner is liberated by saying this phrase - meaning “go to your mother” - as a symbol of freedom and/or liberty.



**Image 1: *Ama-gi* written in classical Sumerian cuneiform** (Source: Halloran John Alan. 2006. *Sumerian Lexicon: A Dictionary Guide to the Ancient Sumerian Language*, David Brown Book Company)

The phenomenon of freedom is related to various meanings and interpretations, determined by the ideological and epistemological tradition. The most basic and common meaning of freedom, isolated from the ideological influences throughout the history could be represented as: “the power to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint” (Oxford dictionaries 2016). In that sense, the freedom remains a *power* of acting, following the individual’s *will*, without obstacles. According to the statement, there are three crucial elements, which the phenomenon freedom is based on: *power*, *will* and *absence of obstacles*. Accordingly, the freedom remains a power (utilizing a right) to *take an action*, presented as acting, speaking, thinking.

## FREEDOM TRADITIONS

Beside the neutral definition of freedom as a phenomenon, a lot of schools, ideological and epistemological traditions are defining it according to their *measures* and *understandings*, as a part of the ideological or epistemological framework. The two most common traditions are: collectivism and individualism.

The both traditions are defining and understanding the phenomenon of freedom in a different way when it comes to the *subject bearer of the freedom*. In the first tradition, the *collective* as a *sum* of individuals, or a *unit* contained of individuals (Laszlo 1963, 6) is the subject bearer of the freedom. The second tradition emphasizes that only the individual could be the subject bearer of the freedom.

As mentioned above, the collective freedom traditions attach the phenomenon of freedom to the *collective unit*, or/and the *sum of individuals*. In that sense, the individuals as single units cannot be the subject bearer of the freedom, but they could be part of the subject through participation in the *unit* or the *sum*. The difference between *collective unit* and *sum of individuals* is that the first is centralized and hierarchical body, while the second is decentralized in a sense that the individuals as single units could participate in the collective exercise of freedom. The most significant traditions of collective freedom are:

1. *nationalism*,
2. *socialism* and
3. *democratic tradition*.

The *nationalism* as an ideology and political theory and particularly its main proponents are creating and utilizing the *quasi-scientific* concept of *national freedom*. In their perspective, the subject bearer of the *national freedom* is the *nation*. In that sense, the category of freedom is connected with its subject bearer - the nation - which represents a collective unit, composed of individuals with a specific homogeneous part of their identity, such as *language*, *religion*, and common *collective memory*. It is supposed, that *collective needs* could be satisfied through *nation's preferences*. The nation could be located as a source of the political power, and it presents a *collective, undivided unit*, broader than the individuals living on the state's territory (Shkarik & Siljanovska 2009, VII Ch.).

On the contrary, *the nation* could be defined as an imagined political community, which represents the sovereign (Anderson 1998, 19). The national freedom remains a *political category*, materialized in the process of state-building, where the individuals could exercise freedom as a part of the national freedom. Operationalized, the national freedom represents a politico-organizational principle for *nation-state* building as a political praxis. The *national freedom* and the *individual liberty* with their connection to the *individual freedom* are not corresponding mutually, and the first could be *potential threat* to the second and the third.

The second ideology - *scientifically based* - is socialism, or narrowly Marxism, which perceives the freedom as *emancipatory (material) freedom*. Marxists are developing the idea of *emancipatory freedom* as the opposite idea of a *metaphysical freedom*, which is often identified with the liberal or individualistic notion of freedom. From Marxist standpoint, "Freedom is the right and capacity of people to determine their own actions, *in a community which is able to provide for the full development of human potentiality* (Encyclopedia of Marxism) ("the right of bread prior then the freedom"). Freedom may be enjoyed by individuals but only in and through community." Accordingly, the phenomenon of freedom is determined by the social context or the community. In that sense, the freedom is not an independent phenomenon, and its fulfillment depends on the *community*, or the *social context* which is identified with *a community that is able to provide for the full development of human potentiality*. In the political praxis of Marxism or the *real socialism* achieved in USSR and Eastern Europe, practically the concepts of *national freedom* and *material freedom* are implemented almost as synonyms. Although conceptually, there are differences between the both: the *nation* positioned itself as a subject barrier of the freedom, *decorated* with Marxist *ornaments*. The most common, most adopted, and most preferential tradition within the collective freedom traditions is the democratic tradition. The democratic tradition, influenced also of individualistic freedom traditions, recognizes individual liberty (negative freedom), and political (positive) freedom, corresponding with Berlin's freedom approach (Berlin 2000, 50). The negative freedom and the positive freedom are not representing a different vision of the freedom in general, but two different ways of defining and conceptualizing the general meaning of freedom. The positive freedom identifies the right of the individual as a part of the *sum of individuals* (Rousseau 1978, 22), often represented through the nation, to participate in the process of policy making, as a subject of the political power.

### *Individualistic freedom traditions*

The third ideology with the biggest impact of today's international political reality - *liberalism* (in its broadest sense) - develops its own freedom perspective, based on the individual liberty that is positioned at the top of its axiological pyramid. The starting point for demystification of the freedom, in the sense of *classical liberalism*, *contemporary libertarianism*, and *individualist/market anarchism*, is dealing with the *phenomenon of individual liberty*. Due to these tendencies, the individual liberty appears as:

1. the highest *value* in the *liberal* axiological pyramid,
2. the main *concept* in the liberal theory,
3. the basic *organizational principle* in a society,
4. the basic *regulation principle* in a society.

All of these meanings or interpretations of individual liberty are narrowly connected with a certain branch of the social science. The individual liberty - *perceived as a value* - is a subject of philosophy, particularly ethics. Perceived as a concept, it remains in the interest of political science within political theories. The interpretation of liberty as a principle varies from the branch standpoint; the political science, or particularly public policy researching, lays an accent on liberty as an (political) organizational principle, while the interpretation of liberty as regulation principle in society could be of interest within sociology and law.

### CONCEPTUALIZING LIBERTY

The first meaning of the individual liberty as a value remains in the frames of the *ethics*, as specific part of the philosophy. The individual liberty is positioned as the highest value in the liberal ethics. Appearing as a value, it is based on two common justifications. The *first justification* of individual liberty in the scope of the liberal axiological tradition is the *moral* (Palmer 2015, 31), *philosophical* or *metaphysical justification*. According to it, the individual liberty appears solely as a goal in the liberal theory, independently from other social values such as *order*, *social justice*, *material equality* (*egalitarianism*) etc. This justification is close to the standpoint of the *objectivism* as 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical school in the scope of the broadest contemporary libertarianism. The *second justification* is the *utilitarian, economic justification* (Palmer 2015, 31) of individual liberty, which could be located in the statement that materializing the idea of individual liberty and developing free society could enhance the process of fulfilling other *social goals* represented as *social values*. In that sense, through developing a *free society*, where the individual liberty got its *absolute form*, other goals such as *social justice*, *order*, *equality* etc. could be achieved. Most of the liberal schools adopt this justification, such as *classical liberalism* in its original context, *individualist anarchist* tradition, and *contemporary libertarianism*.

The second meaning, or individual liberty as a concept, has an *ontological, philosophical* nature. The basic and most common definition of individual liberty is the following: "absence of interpersonal violence, the use of initiated force or violence, or its threat against the person or property of another" (Osterfeld 1986, 239). In that sense, the individual liberty emerges as a *state of non-violence or threat with violence*, as an *antonym* of violence or threat with violence (the violence and/or threat with violence could be submerged into the *category of coercion*) (Rothbard 2009, 11).

Following, the individual liberty is solely *determined* by the *coercion*. The people are fully enjoying *absolute individual liberty* when there is absence of coercion in the *regulation* of their relation with other individuals and with themselves - *principle of self-ownership* (Rothbard 2002, 28). This method of *establishing* and *regulating* interpersonal (social) relations is conceptualized in the principle of *non-aggression*, which is the foundation of the liberal thought. The *alternative regulation method* of coercion is the regulation method of *consent* or *contractual method*, which is non-coercive (Palmer 2009, 126). This method for developing interpersonal (social) relations could be operationalized as *expressing consent for each interpersonal (social) relation that affects the individuals in the relation and out of the relation*. The *consent* or *contractual* method is conceptualized in the *principle of voluntarism*.

## OPERATIONALIZATION OF LIBERTY

Operationalized individual liberty covers two meanings: liberty as an organizational principle, and liberty as a regulation principle. Liberty as an organizational principle is linked to the *politics*, where the individual liberty appears as a primal *organizational principle* the public policy is based on; and a *regulation principle* for the *interpersonal (social) relations* in the concrete society. The first two meanings are more or less abstract meanings of the liberty. However, when liberty is perceived as an organizational and regulation principle of a society, there is a need of specifying it, and the political and social reality effects it produces.

### *Liberty as an organizational principle*

The projection of the individual liberty as an organizational principle could emanate from the most common definition of it and its constitutive elements. The individual liberty remains an *absence of violence and/or threat with violence*. Deriving from the axiom, the relation between the individual liberty and the violence is a *zero-sum game*. Since violence is the determining the liberty, and their relation as a *zero-sum game*, it could be concluded that their relation is *conversely proportional*. The sum of individual liberty has an increasing tendency by lowering the sum of violence from the social (interpersonal) relations, and conversely. The violence and the threat with violence have two forms in a society. The first emerges as *decentralized, non-organized, non-legitimate violence*, while the second as *centralized, organized, and legitimate violence* (Rothbard 2009, 11). The decentralized violence could be exercised by private agents, while the organized one is performed by *the state*.

In the focus of interest of this paper is the political understanding of individual liberty as an antonym of the *organized violence*, manifested in *the State* (Oppenheimer 1926, 24-25). *The State* could be defined as a “human community which successfully claims monopoly on legitimate use of physical coercion on certain territory.” (Fukuyama 2012, 24). It could be also defined as “a group of persons who have and exercise supreme authority within a given territory or over certain population.” (McLaughlin 2007, 74). In that sense, the state could be manifested as a certain group of people that are subject barrier of *political power* (Mann 2006, 9), *condign power* (Galbraith 1995, 4-5), or the power to use and/or threat with violence, expressed on a certain territory (Krasner 1999, 47). In

addition,” the state is sovereign, or the supreme power within its territory, and by definition the ultimate authority for all laws, i.e. binding rules supported by coercive sanctions” (Dosenrode 2007, 19). The violence is the main method the state is based on.

The potential political reality, appearing as a consequence of a full adoption of the principle of individual liberty is the establishment of *free society* (Butler 25, 2013). Depending of the individualistic liberty tradition, the phenomenon of *free society* could be perceived as a *state of anarchy* in the epistemic tradition of individualistic anarchism. According to it, there is no justification of a State as a *violation* of the individual actions (Rothbard 2009, 11). Anarchy remains a state of no political authority (McLaughlin 2007, 27) as a legitimate monopoly of practicing physical force. The phenomenon of free society that could be also perceived as a *state of presence of minimal (public) government* appeared in the *Minimal (Night-watchman) state* (Nozick 1974, 26) as a bearer of political authority. The classical liberalism and contemporary libertarianism adopt a justification solely for minimal State. The minimal (night-watchman) state stands for the state that is significantly limited, and its function is associated with protection of individual life, liberty, and property (Locke, 2006) of non-organized violence. The other spheres of social (interpersonal) relations remain unregulated from the state, but instead, they are objects of *non-coercive regulation* (Rothbard 2009, 913).

The individual liberty in its *absolute form* - in political sense - is organizationally operationalized in a condition of anarchy, or in a condition where the state still exists, but with a small capacity to get involved in the *individual actions*, represented in the form of a Night-watchman state. Projected, the individual liberty within this libertarian position could be identified as an **individual space** for individual action. Basically, it represents a neutral space that each individual possesses, which could be active within it, without any restriction from some political center. If the position is neutral and remains out of the domain of *coercion*, it could be concluded that the *individual spaces* of each individual remains *equal* in a quantitative sense. So, the individual liberty - represented as an individual neutral space of a certain individual - is equal to other individuals' liberties. Finally, if the individual liberties that each individual *possess* are equal in a free society, then the liberty achieved its absolute form. The absolute form of liberty in this sense is not a synonym with the *natural liberty* in Hobbes's (Hobbes 2010, 106) and Locke's sense, but it is a derivative from them, compromised by the individual life as a main value based on liberty (Locke, 2006). Accordingly, the all individual liberties are mutually bound (Ilievski 2015, 12), leavening an equal amount of *neutral individual space*.

**Table 1: Operationalized liberty as an organizational principle**

Method	Principle	Actor	Authority	Type of socio-political organization
Coercive	Physical force	The State	Political	The State
Non-coercive	Individual space	Individuals	No political authority	Anarchy/ Night-watchman state

### *Liberty as a regulation principle*

Regulation in its most basic sense stands for “principle or rule (with or without the coercive power of law) employed in controlling, directing, or managing an activity, organization” (Business Dictionary). In that sense, the regulation stretches the *process of making* and the *sum of rules* and norms, which are conducting human behavior and interpersonal (social) relations. The process of regulation plays a huge role in the establishment of an *order* as a preferential social value and goal. The crucial point of division relates the method of maintaining and exercising the norms, which can be *coercive* or *non-coercive*, and according to the division, the regulation could be *coercive* or *non-coercive*. Analyzed through the prism of voluntarism, the regulation could be with an *individual consent* - for the relations each individual evolves - or non-consensual, where the individual does not express its consent and the regulation is maintained coercively. The coercive method of regulating human behavior covers the existence of the state, as a social regulator with its legitimate monopoly of physical force. *The state* appears as a subject bearer, decision-making center, and executer of the regulation, and correspondingly, a creator of an *order*. The coercive regulation originates from the political authority (McLaughlin 2007, 69) signified in the political center of decision-making, which is practicing the regulation following *top-down* approach. In this case, the objects of the regulation are the individuals and their relation. As a consequence of the coercive or centralized regulation, the *coercive* or *conscious order* (Bamyeh 2009, 28) appears.

In the opposite case (the case of potential non-coercive order), individual liberty - along its understandings as value, concept, and organizational principle - could appear as a regulation principle, an alternative for the coercive regulation, and a basic principle for non-coercive regulation. In that sense, the individual liberty remains an individual space for **individual action**. An individual action is represented in the individual preference and the individual will. The individual actions possess capacity of networking each other by following the human interactions. The order that could appear from a potential network of individual preferences, manifested in the inter-networked individual actions, appears in the literature under various names, such as *spontaneous order* (Proudhon, 1863), *voluntary order*, *unimposed order* (Bamyeh 2009, 28), *polycentric order* (Hayek 2011, 230), *social order* (Elias 2001, 40) or *natural order* (Hoppe 2007, 71). The spontaneous order could be defined as:

Significant and positive coordinating force – in which decentralized negotiations, exchanges, and entrepreneurship converge to produce large-scale coordination without, or beyond the capacity of, any deliberate plans or explicit common blueprints for social or economic development (Chartier & Charles 2011, 2).

The connection of the individual actions constitutes individual rights and duties in a form of *consensual act - contract* (Rothbard 2009, 91) in a form of *practical authority* (Bamyeh 2009, 27) as their source. The *absolute freedom* is relativized with the constituting of the act and the *practical authority* as its essence, in accordance with the individual's preference, manifested in a *given-consent*. The process of self-relativization of freedom positions itself as the essence of the spontaneous order, in a *bottom-up* order.

**Table 2: Operationalized liberty as a regulation principle**

Method	Principle	Actor	Objects	Authority	Goal/Consequence	Type of regulation
<b>Coercive</b>	Non consensual	Political center	Individuals and their relations	Political	Coercive order	Centralized
<b>Non-coercive</b>	Individual action	Individuals	Individuals and their relations	Practical	Spontaneous order	Decentralized

## **THE FREEDOM AS A FRUIT OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY**

As explained beyond, the operationalized individual liberty could appear as an organizational principle, an essence of political reality, and individual liberty, as a regulation principle, an essence of social reality. Operationalized individual liberty could be defined as *individual space for individual action*, where the individual space covers the neutral space of the individual, characterized by exclusion of coercion, and the individual action symbolizes the individual preference, articulated in the neutral space. The individual space appears as a guarantee for the individual action, and without any individual action taken, it is an empty space. Each individual has an equal neutral space for actualizing its preference under these conditions. Once liberty operationalized, the question that arises is whether the freedom could find its place within this operationalization, in the individualistic freedom tradition in general.

The basic and neutral definition of freedom that the paper started with is “the power to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.” In accordance to this neutral definition of the freedom in most general sense, it could be stated that it corresponds with the second part of the operationalized liberty. It refers to the individual action that takes place within the individual space. The first part of the definition - “the power to act, speak or think” - refers to the individual action. The second part of the definition - “as one wants without hindrance or restraint” - refers to the individual space, which remains a non-coercion guarantee for the action, or the power to act, speak, or think.

In this case, the individual liberty could be analyzed as an individual space, while the freedom as an individual action. The individual space and the individual action complement each other. The individual space covers no coercive interference, while the individual action allows consensual interference. The individual space remains a neutral space that is not connected with individual preferences which are also crucial to the individual action. The individual action is a subjective category determined by the



individual preference, while the individual space is an objective category that is socially and politically recognized and legitimate. The individual spaces are equal in their quantitative dimension, while each action could not be equal with another action. In that sense, the individual space could be identified as a base for the action, while the action could appear as a superstructure based on the space. The individual space is politically established as a political organizational principle, while the individual action is socially established as a result of the space and the human interaction. The action deriving from its unequal nature varies, while the individual space preserves its constant and equal nature. Finally, the individual space covers a passive principle with constant nature, while the individual action is determined by each individual.

As a conclusion, it could be stated that the freedom is a fruit of liberty, therefore the liberty guarantees the space where the freedom potentially arises from, and accordingly, the first determinates the second. The individual liberty could be defined as the individual space for an individual action, which lays an accent on the individual space. The freedom could be defined as the power to act, speak, or think as one wants without *coercive* hindrance or restraint, and to pay more attention of the power to act, speak, and think, or synthesized in an individual action. The space is a precondition for action, while the action is the sense and the meaning of the space.

## CONCLUSION

It could be concluded that the operationalization of liberty leads to demystification of the freedom in the frames of liberal epistemology. Firstly, the phenomenon of freedom is defined in a *neutral*, etymological way. Two basic freedom traditions are exposed: the collective freedom tradition and the individualistic freedom tradition. The essential difference between the both is the difference around the subject bearer of freedom, which could be a collective unit, sum of individuals, or an individual. In the scope of the individualistic freedom tradition, conceptualization and operationalization takes place. The conceptualization of liberty stretches the individual liberty understood as *value* (philosophical standpoint) and as *concept* (political science and political philosophy standpoint). The operationalization of liberty covers the two meanings of individual liberty as an organizational principle and as a regulation principle.

Namely, it could be stated that the freedom is a fruit of liberty, therefore the liberty guarantees the space where the freedom potentially arises from, and accordingly, the first determinates the second. The division line is the following:

1. The individual liberty could be defined as the individual space for individual action, which lays an accent on the individual space;
2. The freedom could be defined as the power to act, speak, or think as one wants without *coercive* hindrance or restraint, and to pay more attention to the power to act, speak, think, or *synthetized in individual action*.
3. The space is a precondition for action, while the action is the sense and the meaning of the space.

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